

EXHIBIT 39

ROY THOMAS' LEGENDARY
COMICS FANZINE



\$5.95
In the USA

No. 9
JULY
2001



JOHN ROMITA

...AND ALL
THAT JAZZ!



Vol. 3, No. 9 / July 2001

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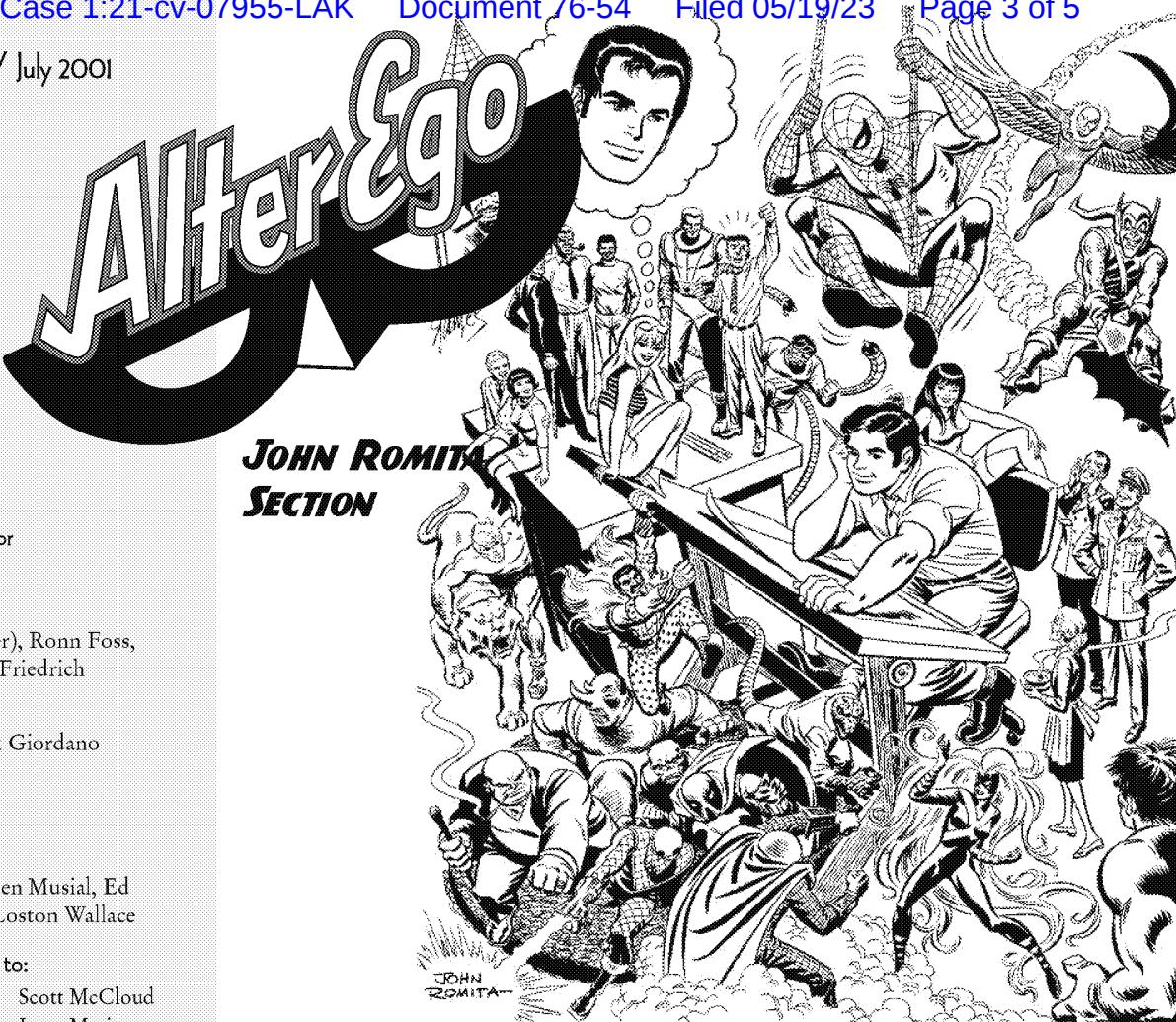
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Special Section on Roy Thomas' Dream Projects, FCA, & Comic Crypt Flip Us!

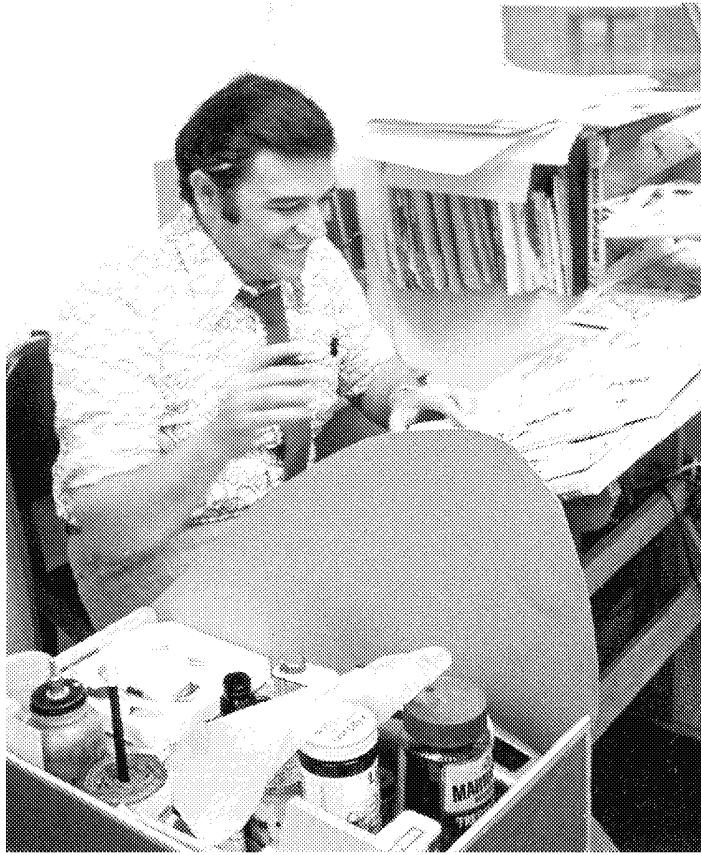
About Our Cover: John Romita had hoped to finish a brand new piece of art to be the cover of this issue. However, he's been so busy with projects for Marvel and others—even though he's officially "retired"—that at the last minute he had to beg off. So we assembled one of our trademark montages: a 1980 self-portrait, amid a frame of many (though far from all) of the Marvel super-heroes he's drawn at one time or another. The framing art, according to Romita connoisseur Mike Burkey (who provided it) was previously used only as the back cover of a trade paperback in the 1970s. [Self-portrait ©2001 John Romita; Marvel art ©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc.; Red Sonja ©2001 Red Sonja Properties, Inc.]

Above: This more humorous portrait by John R. of himself with the cast of The Amazing Spider-Man has been printed several times, beginning in Marvel's own fan-mags. But somehow, we just couldn't bear to leave it out! [©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc.]



Alter Ego™ is published 8x a year by TwoMorrows, 1812 Park Drive, Raleigh, NC 27605, USA. Phone: (919) 833-8092. Roy Thomas, Editor; John Morrow, Publisher. Alter Ego Editorial Offices: Rt. 3, Box 468, St. Matthews, SC 29135, USA. Fax: (803) 826-6501; E-mail: roydann@obg.net. Send subscription funds to TwoMorrows, NOT to the editorial offices. Single issues: \$5.95 (\$7.00 Canada, \$9.00 elsewhere). Four-issue subscriptions: \$20 US, \$27 Canada, \$37 elsewhere. All characters are © their respective companies. All material © their creators unless otherwise noted. All editorial matter © Roy Thomas. Alter Ego is a TM of Roy & Dann Thomas. FCA is a TM of P.C. Hamerlinck. Printed in Canada. FIRST PRINTING.

FIFTY YEARS ON THE 'A' LIST



A 1996 Romita Spider-Man sketch, flanked by Jazzy Johnny hard at work in 1967 amid furniture he made himself ("I must've been crazy!" he says).
[Photo courtesy of and art ©2001 John Romita;
Spider-Man ©2001 Marvel Characters, Inc.]

ROY THOMAS: Okay, John, just to get it out of the way—you were born in Brooklyn in 1930, right?

JOHN ROMITA: Yeah. Just maybe five years too early—no, too *late*. Because one of my biggest regrets is that I wasn't in the first generation of comic artists. While I was in junior high school, Joe Kubert, who's only a few years older than me, got in on it, doing "Hawkman"!

RT: Of course, if you'd had your wish, you'd be a decade older.

ROMITA: Yeah, I'd be eighty now. [laughs] I started drawing when I was five. Parents and relatives say, "Ooh" and "Ahh" and how great it is, and you continue drawing because you like to get the pats on the back.

I was a street performer when I was about ten. The gang of kids I hung out with used to scrounge bits of plaster from torn-down



A Candid Conversation With Marvel Artist/Art Director Supreme **JOHN ROMITA**

Conducted by Roy Thomas
Transcribed by Brian K. Morris
with special thanks to Mike Burkey

buildings, because we couldn't afford chalk, and I would draw on the streets. Once I did a 100-foot Statue of Liberty, starting at one manhole and finishing at the next. That was the distance between manholes in Brooklyn.

RT: "From sewer to shining sewer," huh?

ROMITA: People were coming from other neighborhoods to see it and hoping it wouldn't rain. I also used to draw Superman, Batman—all the super-heroes that were coming out. [Virginia Romita says something in the background.] Virginia reminds me, as she always does, that I also became the source of little drawings of nude girls for all the boys in the neighborhood. Guys would beg me to do them, and she would say she was disappointed in me for doing those drawings. She was nine when I was eleven. Actually, she caused me to stop doing them.

Spider-Man. I wanted to stay on *Daredevil*. The only reason I did *Spider-Man* was because Stan asked me and I felt that I should help out, like a good soldier. I never really felt comfortable on *Spider-Man* for years. I had felt at home immediately on *Daredevil*. On *Spider-Man* I felt obliged to ghost Ditko because—this may sound naive, but I was convinced, in my own mind, that he was going to come back in two or three issues.

RT: Even though he and Stan hadn't been speaking to each other for months if not a year before Steve left?

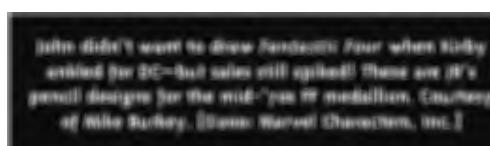
ROMITA: I didn't know a lot of that.

RT: It wasn't a secret within the company. I thought you'd have learned that from Sol [Brodsky] or somebody, even if Stan hadn't mentioned it to you.

ROMITA: I had heard rumors that Ditko was plotting the stories because he and Stan couldn't agree on plots. But he had done 38 issues and two annuals—and I couldn't believe that a guy would walk away from a successful book that was the second-highest seller at Marvel. I said to myself, "Naw, he's not going to stay away." I didn't know Ditko. I assumed he'd do what I would have done—he'd think about how he had given up a top character, and he'd be back. And I was sort of counting the days until I could get back on *Daredevil*.

In fact, when I did the Spider-Man/Daredevil stories [*Daredevil* #16-17], I really felt it was obvious that I couldn't do Spider-Man as well as I could do Daredevil. I was amazed when Stan gave me *Spider-Man* to do. I felt he was desperate. So I did the book to help him out, hoping all the while that it would be temporary.

After six months, when I realized it wasn't temporary, I finally stopped trying to ghost Ditko. Till then, I was using a thin line. On #43, the one with Jameson's son, I outlined the whole thing with a Ravidograph and then used the big, bold brush to put ink in. I thought that was



JOHN ROMITA

John made a triumphant (but brief!) return to *Graphic Design* in 1974, as in this the *Summer*-themed page. The promotional figure above right was both painted and inked by John some time later. (Ed. Note: page courtesy of Al Bigley; Cap figure courtesy of Mike Burley, *Stance* Marvel Characters, Inc.)

Ditko's style. Looking back on it now, I realize I wasn't doing a very good Ditko imitation, but I was not being myself, either. In *Daredevil* #18, my last issue, I was doing that big, bold thing that Frank Giacoia inked; and when I inked myself, like on the covers, it was a big, bold style with a big, heavy line. But on *Spider-Man* I was doing these nine-panel pages and the thin line, and I was doing Peter Parker without any bone structure—just like Ditko was doing, I thought. The only reason it wasn't better was that I couldn't ape him any better.

RT: Do you think Stan would've got around to showing Mary Jane when he did if you hadn't taken over the book? Because he did it only a few issues later.

ROMITA: I think he once hinted to me that he had stalled at showing her. Maybe he suspected a while in advance that he and Ditko were not going to stay together.

RT: I remember the day Ditko quit. He came into the office I shared with Sol and Flo Steinberg, dropped off some pages, and left. Sol scuttled in to see Stan right away, and then I learned about it. At the time, Sol had a memo on his desk for a \$5 a page raise for Steve, which was fairly substantial for 1965. I don't think he ever even got around to mentioning it to Steve, not that it would've made any difference.

So, whether Stan was stalling with regard to Mary Jane or not, he was definitely not trying to edge Steve off *Spider-Man*. But Steve gave them no choice. He just quit. He told Sol, "I'll finish these jobs I'm working on now, and that's it."

ROMITA: I think Stan was just *subconsciously* holding back on revealing Mary Jane.

RT: If so, do you think it was partly because, good as Ditko was and is, he didn't draw women as pretty as you do?